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plural communication serial ports, each of said communication serial ports being configured to couple the multiple port unit to a peripheral device; and

control means for interrogating the network links and communicatively coupling said communication serial ports to a selected one of said network ports based on the interrogation of the network links; and

wherein said control means interrogates plural computers over each of the network links in an alternating manner.

31. **(Previously presented)** A multiple port unit as recited in claim 30, wherein said network ports are configured to couple the multiple port unit to the plural computers and wherein said control means comprises computer interrogating means for interrogating each of the plural computers and designating a selected one of the computers as an active computer to control the peripheral devices based on the interrogation of the computers.

32. **(Canceled)**

33. **(Previously presented)** A multiple port unit as recited in claim 31, wherein said network communication serial ports comprise Ethernet ports.

34. **(Previously presented)** A multiple port unit as recited in claim 33, wherein said communication serial ports comprise serial ports.

35. **(Original)** A multiple port unit as recited in claim 33, further comprising two redundant power supplies.

36. **(Original)** A multiple port unit as recited in claim 30, wherein said control means comprises means for detecting a network carrier signal.

37. **(Original)** A multiple port unit as recited in claim 31, wherein said computer interrogation means comprises Packet Internet Groper.

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38. **(Previously presented)** A multiple port unit as recited in claim 30, further comprising a data bus coupled to said control means, said network ports and said serial communication ports.

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